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ABSTRACT

Two sections comprise this essay describing the process of planning for educational change. The first section defines values, goals, and operating procedures. These factors combine to facilitate educational change. The second section identifies the three phases of educational planning. Needs assessment, management techniques, and evaluation procedures require the processing of data to address organizational problems and to carry out the appropriate change. Descriptions of the concept of environmental issues as well as the cyclical nature of the planning process clarify educational change practices. (JAM)

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The Process of Planning for Educational Change

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ABSTRACT

This essay is composed of two sections. The first section defines values, goals and operating procedures as integrating forces in an organization. These forces form the background for planning for educational change. The second section of the essay defines the three phases of educational planning. The concept of environmental influences is discussed, as well as the cyclical nature of the planning process.

VALUES, GOALS AND OPERATING PROCEDURES

Values

Values are the set of beliefs which guide the organization. These values or guiding beliefs, coupled with the expectations of the members of the organization, create powerful norms which shape the behavior of those in the organization (Patterson, Purkey & Parker, 1986). They serve as criteria against which actions and activities within the organization are judged. Values therefore produce a distinct identity for the organization, creating the organizational culture (Peters & Waterman, 1982).

Since the organizational culture is derived from values and behavioral norms, there is a key connection between it and the phases of planning. Assessing needs, defining problems, developing programs to remedy problems, and evaluation of those programs must be valued by the organization. Planning must be seen as the norm to become an inherent part of the organization's culture. As part of the culture, the planning process is then validated and those involved in planning are supported. This is vitally important if the goal of the planning process is to effect educational change. Without support from the organizational culture, the change will not be maintained.

Goals

Goals are the objectives of the organization. They are equivalent with its purpose for existing, often termed the mission statement. Goals reflect the organization's identity. They are selected based upon their congruence with the organization's culture, described previously as its values and behavioral norms. Once selected, the goals are prioritized into a set structure. Then, all organizational activities and procedures are designed to maximize effort towards achievement of the goals.

In order for planned change efforts to be maintained, they must fit within the goal structure of the organization. As a part of the organization's goal structure, the planned change goals will be driven forward towards compeletion.

Operating Procedures

The everyday operational regularities of the organization give insight into how the organization works. They are unique procedures by which the organization goes about utilizing its beliefs in achieving its goals. Coupled with the organization's culture, these procedures dictate how the members of the system function.

Understanding how the system works and how people function in the system is necessary in order for good

planning to occur (Scheive and Schoenheit, 1987). This knowledge is important for aligning program activities and evaluation processes with the operational regularities of the organization. For example, if an organization operates along a strict hierarchy of authority, ad hoc task force planning would not be effective without the inclusion of and validation from the appropriate members of the hierarchy.

Summary

In summary, values are the set of guiding beliefs which help to create norms and establish the culture of the organization. Goals state the organization's purpose, reflecting the culture. The organization's everyday operational regularities are unique procedures by which the organization goes about utilizing its beliefs in achieving its goals.

The concepts of values, goals and operational procedures are intwined in the planning process. In planning, knowledge of the organization's operational procedures allows for the selection of an effective process for activities which is congruent with that of the organization. This, coupled with fitting the planned change goals into the organization's goal structure, provides the framework for the goals to be driven forward towards completion. In addition, the planning process must be

valued and seen as an organizational norm in order to effect change. Values, goals and operational procedures are the integrating forces in the organization. They provide cohesion in the organization and constitute the background of good planning.

THE COMPONENTS OF PLANNING FOR EDUCATIONAL CHANGE

Planning is defined here as a process used to: 1) identify organizational needs or problems, 2) plan and carry out programs or projects to address defined needs, and 3) to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of these programs or projects. This definition identifies the three components or phases of planning for educational change: needs assessment, management and evaluation.

Needs Assessment

Needs assessment is the process by which organizational needs are defined. Data are collected, usually both quantitative and qualitative in form.

Quantitative data refer to information assessed in numerical form, such as the number of teachers employed, the cost of special education services or the scores on student achievement tests. Qualitative data, usually in narrative form, reflect the assessment of things not easily measured in numbers, such as descriptions of attitudes or behavior patterns.

The data collected are then analyzed to determine if there are discrepancies between what exists and what is expected to exist. This gap represents an organizational need or problem to be addressed.

The needs assessment process may be used to identify new problems or to redefine old ones. A survey or questionnaire can be conducted to gather information regarding perceived needs. Data can come from an evaluation of existing organizational programs. Information can also come from the evaluation of special projects created to remedy previously defined problems. These last two sources exemplify the cyclical nature of planning. The evaluation information cycles back into a new needs assessment.

To present the broadest possible picture of the problem, data are then gathered on all of the forces which may affect it. This includes the assessment of forces operating within the organization or the internal environment, and assessment of the forces outside the organization or the external environment. In the literature on planning, this is often referred to as force field analysis. Force field analysis is defined as the identification of internal and external environmental factors which support or restrain the problem (Hersey & Blanchard, 1982). Supporting forces drive towards change, restraining forces work against change.

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The forces or environmental conditions which may support or restrain the problem are: social, political, cultural, economic, technological and legal factors (Gaynor & Clauset, 1985). The behaviors of individuals and the patterns of interactions among people are examples of social forces. Political forces are those factors which attempt to influence the governance procedures in the environments. The basic beliefs and the daily behavior of the members structure the environments' cultural forces. The financial standing of the organization and the economy in the outside environment are examples of economic forces. Technological forces refers to the levels of technology within and outside the system, such as the acceptance and use of computers. And finally, legal factors include laws and policies which impact the environments.

Once the problem has been defined and assessed in terms of all the forces which affect it, the problem is then examined in terms of the hierarchy of existing goals and programs in the organization. Alternative solutions to the problem, based on the assessment data are proposed and discussed. Judgments are made determining the utility and feasibility of pursuing various remedies to the problem. Then, the planning cycle moves on. The data collected feed into the next phase of planning: management.

Management

In management for educational change, the forces which affect the problem being addressed must be considered again. It stands to reason that if the existing conditions within and outside the organization affect the problem, they will also influence the remedies for the problem. Since these forces are dynamic in nature, management must continually consider them as the educational change is implemented.

The management phase of planning has four steps: 1) programming, 2) organizing, 3) motivating, and 4) controlling.

Programming

Programming is the stage at which a commitment is made to address the problem defined in the needs assessment via a specific program or project. The goals of the program or project relate to the identified problem and take into consideration the forces which affect it. Outcomes and products for the program are also specified, thus clarifying the scope of the program. These outcomes and products also provide targets for which activities can be planned and criteria against which they can be evaluated.

A time table is set up for the program at this stage. Time specifications for goals, activities, outcomes and products are defined. Judgments are made as to what will be

realistically accomplished in a given period of time. Lag time to account for environmental influences is calculated. Charting events with a GANTT or PERT diagram is a useful visual tool in calculating a time table.

The decisions made in this programming stage of management are based upon data collected in the needs assessment. Once again, the feeding of one phase of planning into another shows the cyclical nature of planning for educational change.

Organizing

Organizing refers to obtaining the necessary commodities to accomplish goals and activities. The availability of commodities must be assessed. This includes both physical and human resources, existing and new. Commodities range from information, technical expertise and support to material goods and space. They must be procured and allocated, once again, taking into consideration the environmental conditions.

Power is used in the obtaining of commodities. Patterson, Purkey and Parker (1987) suggest a broad view of power.

> "Having access to information, support, and resources is the basis for power to make things happen. Power to make things happen is located throughout the organization." (p.40).

This suggests that power does not lie solely in the position of the leader. Other members of the organization have the power to bring needed commodities forward. Power shared is power increased. In management, it is important to cultivate all sources of power.

Motivating

The third step of management is motivating. This is defined as: directing, communicating, and leading.

Directing implies power of position, the ability to direct followers.

Communication is the exchange of information. To be effective the information must be relative, timely, accurate, well-located, well-formulated and cost-effective (Gaynor & Clauset, 1985) . Communication must take place on all levels, formal and informal. Sources must be cultivated to keep an ongoing exchange of information, thus providing the input needed for the everyday operation of the program. Communication is the most critical aspect of management. It provides a mechanism for adjusting plannig to deal with the dynamic forces in the environments which affect the problem and the program designed to remedy it.

Leadership is the attempt to influence the behavior of others in a way which brings about the accomplishment of the goals and activities (Hersey & Blanchard, 1982). The process of leadership is complex and a variety of theories

on leadership define a variety of characteristics of good leaders. Each educational leader must identify for him/herself what style of operating will influence others in order to facillitate the completion of the program or project successfully.

Controlling

The final component of management is defined as controlling. This refers to the monitoring or controlling of the program's process as it moves towards the final outcomes. Progress towards completion of activities must be monitored in order for the program to remain on target. In addition, with a continuous information flow, potential problems can be anticipated and solved as they arise.

Evaluation

The evaluation phase of planning involves the definition of a format for collecting and analyzing data. The criteria for defining an evaluation are: comprehensiveness, technical quality, utility, and propriety (Duke & Corno, 1981).

Comprehensiveness asks are data: sufficient to answer questions, from multiple sources, likely to clarify choices?

Technical quality addresses the questions: are there monitoring of data collection, analysis and reporting? Are there accurate interpretations of the data?

Utility refers to usefulness. Are the results related to the major evaluative questions? Are they clearly reported and disseminated?

Propriety addresses the program or participants' rights to be involved in evaluation and the responsibility of the evaluators to the consumers of the evaluative reports.

With the evaluation process defined, data are then collected, usually both quantitative and qualitative, which assess outcomes and products. A comparison is made between existing conditions at the time of needs assessment and at the close of the program or project. Evaluative questions are then answered and judgments made. Data are often used as a basis for a new needs assessment, restarting the planning process.

Summary

The planning process has three components or phases: needs assessment, management and evaluation.

Needs assessment involves the collection of data to define a need or problem. This problem is defined as a discrepancy between what exists over time and what is expected to exist. In addition, data are gathered on internal and external forces which support or restrain resolution to the problem. Once judgments have been made determining the utility and feasibility of pursuing various

remedies to the specific problem, planning moves into the management phase.

In management, the data generated in needs assessment are applied to programming, organizing, motivating and controlling. In programming, activities are set and carried out. Motivating is directing, communicating with and leading personnel to accomplish activities. Controlling refers to the monitoring of the program.

Criteria for defining the evaluation of the program include: comprehensiveness, technical quality, utility and propriety. Quantitative and qualitative assessment of outcomes and activities provide the data for judging the success of the program. Often, the data generated in the evaluation are used to redefine the problem, determining the need for new or continuing programs.

It is clear that planning is a cyclical process. Information and data gathered in one phase flows to another. The concept of environmental forces affecting the problem and the remedy to it resurfaces in each phase of planning.

CONCLUSION

Planning for educational change is a complex process. However, the process is made managable by a few key concepts discussed in this essay. First, understanding the values, goals and operating procedures of the organization are important to insure that the planned change becomes accepted

and maintained within the organization. Second, in order to carry out the change, all of the forces which are at play within and outside of the organization must be considered on an ongoing basis when planning. This allows for the planning to be flexible, adapting to the ever changing environments. Mobilizing power sources and keeping communication lines open help maintain this flexibility. And third, the planning process is cyclical. Each phase feeds into the next, creating a big picture of the educational change.

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GUIDED QUESTIONS FOR:
THE PROCESS OF PLANNING FOR EDUCATIONAL CHANGE

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NEEDS ASSESSMENT

1. Assess organizational needs both quantitatively and qualitatively:
   -What are the facts?
   -How do people feel about them?
   -Is there a discrepancy between what is and what is expected to be?

2. Identify new needs or redefine old ones:
   -What do people think is needed?
   -Do the results of the last program or project evaluation show a new need?

3. Assess the variables - social, political, cultural, economic, technological, and legal:
   -How does the system work?
   -How do the people function in the system?
   -What are the values that guide the organization?
   -What are the norms which shape behavior?
   -What are the everyday operational regularities?
   -What are the economic circumstances?
   -What are the educational laws and court decisions that apply?

4. Determine the solution:
   -What are the potential solutions?
   -Is there an existing organizational program that can address the identified need?
   -Must a new program or project be developed?
   -Who and what support addressing this need?
   -Who and what restrain growth in this area?
   -What works best given the variables?
   -Where does the program or project fit in the overall organizational picture?
   -Will the change be maintained when the program or project solution is completed?

MANAGEMENT

1. Programming
   A. Specify the goals:
      -How do they relate to the problem?
      -How do they relate to the organization's goals?
      -What are the expected outputs and products?
      -Do the goals fit with the organization's norms and values?
   B. Specify the procedures and activities:
      -Who will do what, when and where?
      -Do the procedures maximize achievement of the goals?
      -Do they fit into the organizations everyday operations?
      -What will be the outcomes and products?

2. Organizing
   A. Commodities:
      -Who and what are available?
      -How can needed commodities be procured?
      -How will they be allocated?
      -What are the cost factors?
   B. Power:
      -What is the organization's view of power?
      -Who holds which commodities?
      -Who can be mobilized?

3. Motivating
   A. Leadership:
      -How can the behavior of others be influenced?
      -What power sources can be tapped?
   B. Communication - relative, timely, accurate, well-located and cost effective:
      -How will the information be exchanged?
      -What are the formal channels of communication?
      -What are the informal channels?
      -Who are the resources?

4. Controlling
   Monitoring:
      -Is the project on course?
      -How can adjustments be made to solve problems as they arise?
      -How are public relations?

EVALUATION

1. Comprehensiveness:
   -Is the data collected sufficient?
   -Is it from multiple sources?
   -Can information be clarified as needed?

2. Technical quality:
   -Are variables controlled?
   -Are sources both quantitative and qualitative?
   -Is data collection monitored?
   -Are the interpretations accurate?

3. Utility:
   -Are the results related to the questions addressed in the evaluation?
   -Are the results clearly reported?
   -Will the evaluation results disseminated?

4. Propriety:
   -What rights do the project participants have in participation and protection?
   -What is the responsibility of the evaluator to the consumers of the report?